WU 03/07/2/13 PC 1/US03/05147

We claim:

1. A method of treating a neurodegenerative immunological disorder, comprising administering to a mammal a therapeutically effective amount of BCMA, an antibody against a BCMA ligand, or an antibody against BCMA, thereby treating the disorder.

- 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the disorder is multiple sclerosis.
- 3. A method of treating demyelination in a mammal, comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of BCMA, an antibody against a BCMA ligand, or an antibody against BCMA to the mammal, thereby treating demyelination, wherein the mammal has or is at risk for developing multiple sclerosis.
- 4. A method of treating CNS inflammation in a mammal, comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of BCMA, an antibody against a BCMA ligand, or an antibody against BCMA to the mammal, thereby treating CNS inflammation, wherein the mammal has or is at risk for developing multiple sclerosis.
- 5. A method of reducing a CNS-specific autoantibody titer in a mammal, comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of BCMA, an antibody against a BCMA ligand, or an antibody against BCMA to the mammal, thereby reducing the CNS-specific autoantibody titer wherein the mammal has or is at risk for developing multiple sclerosis.
- 6. The method as in any one of claims 1-5, wherein the mammal has or is at risk for diabetes.

WO 03/01/4/13 PC 1/U303/0514/

7. The method as in any one of claims 1-5, wherein the mammal is human.

- 8. The method as in any one of claims 1-5, wherein the BCMA comprises a polypeptide comprising a ligand-binding domain of SEQ ID NO:1.
- 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence substantially identical to amino acids 1-51 of SEQ ID NO:1.
- 10. The method of claim 8, wherein the polypeptide comprises amino acids 8-41 of SEQ ID NO:1.
- 11. The method of claim 8, wherein the polypeptide comprises amino acids 1-51 of SEQ ID NO:1.
- 12. The method of claim 8, wherein the polypeptide comprises the amino acid sequence as in SEQ ID NO:3.
 - 13. The method of claim 8, wherein the polypeptide comprises:
 - (a) a portion of the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:1; or
 - (b) an amino acid sequence encoded by a nucleic acid that
 is at least 60 nucleotides long and hybridizes to the
 nucleic acid encoding (a) under defined conditions;

wherein the polypeptide is capable of specifically binding APRIL or BAFF, or both.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the defined conditions comprise pretreating for 8 hours at 65°C in a solution comprising 6 x SSC, 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 1 mM EDTA, 0.02% PVP, 0.02% Ficoll, 0.02% BSA, and 500 µg/ml denatured salmon sperm DNA; hybridizing for 48 hours at

WU 03/072713 PC 1/0303/03147

65°C; and washing for 1 hour at 37°C in a solution comprising 2 x SSC, 0.01% PVP, 0.01% Ficoll, and 0.01% BSA and for 45 minutes at 50°C in a solution comprising 0.1 x SSC.

- 15. The method of claim 8, wherein the polypeptide further comprises a Fc fragment of lgG1 or a Fc fragment of lgG4.
- 16. A method for identifying a compound effective for treatment of a neurodegenerative immunological disorder, the method comprising:
 - (a) preparing a first binding mixture comprising the polypeptide as in claim 8 and a BCMA ligand;
 - (b) measuring the amount of binding between the polypeptide and the BCMA ligand in the first mixture;
 - (c) preparing a second binding mixture comprising the polypeptide and the BCMA ligand;
 - (d) measuring the amount of binding between the polypeptide and the BCMA ligand in the second mixture; wherein difference in the amount of binding measured in (b) and (d) above a predetermined threshold is indicative of the test compound being effective for treatment of a neurodegenerative immunological disorder;
 - (e) testing the compound identified in (d) in at least one animal model of multiple sclerosis.
- 17. A method of treating a subject in need for treatment of multiple sclerosis, the method comprising administering soluble BCMA to the subject

WO 03/072713 PCT/US03/05147

in an amount and for a period of time sufficient to delay onset of acute phase of the disease.

- 18. A method of treating a subject in need for treatment of multiple sclerosis, the method comprising administering soluble BCMA to the subject in an amount and for a period of time sufficient to reduce rate of relapses.
- 19. The method of claim 17 or 18, wherein the soluble BCMA comprises an amino acid sequence as set out in SEQ ID NO:3 from amino acid 24 to amino acid 74.
- 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the soluble BCMA further comprises an Fc region of human lg.
- 21. Use of BCMA, an antibody against a BCMA ligand, or an antibody against BCMA in preparation of a pharmaceutical for treatment of a neurodegenerative immunological disorder.
- 22. Use of a nucleic acid encoding BCMA in preparation of a pharmaceutical for treatment of a neurodegenerative immunological disorder.
- 23. The use of claim 21 or 22, wherein the disorder is multiple sclerosis.